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Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 23 April 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Bugajski ..... (Poland)

Contents

General debate on issues related to all aspects of the work of the Preparatory Committee (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

General debate on issues related to all aspects of the work of the Preparatory Committee (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Baumann** (Germany), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, reaffirmed the critical importance of concerted action to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. The States members of the Initiative were deeply committed to their core mandate of strengthening the three pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy established by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, on the basis of the action plan contained in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the areas of common ground identified at the Preparatory Committee's previous session.

2. The illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continued to pose a grave threat to global security. She hoped that dialogue would lead to concrete steps by that country towards the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner, and strongly urged the country to fulfil the commitments it had undertaken within the framework of the Six-Party Talks, including those made in the Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks, to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes, to accede once more to the Treaty, to comply with its obligations under multiple Security Council resolutions, to refrain from conducting further nuclear and missile tests and to adhere to its International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement. The States members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative were committed to the continued implementation of their obligations under Security Council resolutions and to maintaining maximum diplomatic and economic pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

3. The States members of the Initiative were also committed to contributing to a successful outcome of the current review cycle based on comprehensive dialogue on all three Treaty pillars. They urged all States parties to fully comply with their obligations and commitments under the Treaty, in particular by fully and promptly implementing the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference, and would themselves continue to build on that action plan by developing new ideas and initiatives that could help to build bridges between States parties. They were also supporting discussions on strengthening the review process, in particular through the promotion of gender equality, and were seeking support from other States parties for those efforts. She drew the attention of the Committee to the working papers submitted by the Initiative (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.24, NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.26, NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.29 and NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.36).

4. It was regrettable that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty had yet to come into force, and she urged all States that had yet to do so to ratify it without delay.

5. Sustained, high-level political leadership and unwavering commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty were needed to achieve greater reductions in nuclear arsenals and make progress towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Trust and confidence-building measures were also needed to create an environment conducive to disarmament. She called on the five nuclear-weapon States parties to make progress in strengthening the Treaty and to use a standard reporting form such as the reporting template developed by the Initiative to provide regular reports on the implementation of their nuclear disarmament obligations. Further dialogue on the information provided in those reports would be welcome.

6. The States members of the Initiative supported the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament, and welcomed active collaboration and dialogue between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States in those processes. They were also working towards the early commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (fissile material cut-off treaty), and in that regard welcomed the work of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group and looked forward to the group's final report later in 2018. It was important that the Conference on Disarmament should launch negotiations on such a treaty as soon as possible.

7. The States members of the Initiative were committed to strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the IAEA safeguards system. IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreements, together with additional protocols, were considered the current international verification standard. She called on all States that had not yet done so to conclude and implement additional protocols without delay.

8. Continued strict implementation of the joint comprehensive plan of action, which demonstrated that diplomacy could successfully advance the objectives of the Non-Proliferation Treaty when supported by broad international consensus, would ensure the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme. She welcomed IAEA activities to monitor and verify the adherence of the Islamic Republic of Iran to its commitments under the plan.

9. The States members of the Initiative supported the right of all States parties who met their non-proliferation obligations to access the full benefits of nuclear science and technology. They welcomed the central role of IAEA in ensuring the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and in safeguards verification and encouraged all States to commit to the ongoing implementation of safeguards and to effective levels of safety and security.

10. As a diverse cross-regional group of non-nuclear-weapon States, the States members of the Initiative would continue to play a constructive and proactive role in facilitating discussions on those and other challenging issues and bridging diverse positions to help reinvigorate the review cycle process, and were committed to supporting a productive outcome at the 2020 Review Conference, particularly in view of the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

11. **Ms. Davidova** (Bulgaria) said that her country attached key importance to the Non-Proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of the global regime for non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and was therefore committed to its universal implementation. The Treaty had already made an unparalleled contribution to international peace and security. However, all States were responsible for achieving further progress and fully exploiting the current review cycle to establish a positive and realistic approach that would reaffirm the Treaty's validity and address current disarmament and non-proliferation challenges.

12. Her country was committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. The Treaty provided a legal framework for the pursuit of that goal, which could be achieved only through a gradual and inclusive approach. Similarly, the only realistic means of attaining effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament was through a progressive approach based on practical and achievable steps, with due consideration of the complex security environment and the strategic context. One such step was the entry into force of the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. As an Annex 2 State, Bulgaria had signed and ratified that Treaty, and called on all remaining Annex 2 States to do the same as a matter of priority. Priority should also be placed on the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which would further the implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and reinforce non-proliferation norms and obligations. In that regard, Bulgaria appreciated the work of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group.

13. Initiatives in the area of nuclear disarmament verification were vital. She therefore welcomed the imminent commencement of work by the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament, as well as ongoing work in other forums, such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

14. Further reductions in nuclear stockpiles represented a practical step towards disarmament. The preservation of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty) was crucial for the security of Europe and beyond.

15. Proliferation posed a significant threat to global peace and security. The nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were of particular concern. A peaceful, political and diplomatic solution to the problem was required, accompanied by concrete steps by that country towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. She called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with its international obligations.

16. The full implementation of the joint comprehensive plan of action made an essential contribution to regional peace and security and assured the international community of the exclusively peaceful nature of the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran. She urged that country to refrain from ballistic missile launches, which violated Security Council resolution 2231 (2015).

17. Bulgaria was concerned by the non-compliance of the Syrian Arab Republic with its safeguards agreement, and called on that country to adhere to its additional protocol without delay. The use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic was a grave violation of international law and of the country's non-proliferation obligations.

18. The IAEA comprehensive safeguards system was key to addressing proliferation risks and implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In order to perform its

duties, the Agency must remain credible, professional and well-funded. As a member State of the European Union, Bulgaria contributed substantively in that respect. Bulgaria had been working for decades on all aspects of the peaceful use of atomic energy, in accordance with the highest safety, security and non-proliferation standards. It supported the crucial role of IAEA in promoting those standards, and participated in various initiatives to develop international cooperation in nuclear energy applications.

19. **Ms. Baumann** (Germany) said that the fiftieth anniversary of the Non-Proliferation Treaty was an opportune moment to reflect on its enormous contribution to global peace and security. The Treaty had enabled the establishment of a sophisticated and successful non-proliferation and disarmament regime which had prevented the spread of nuclear weapons and dissuaded many States from pursuing nuclear options.

20. Germany valued the Treaty's role in anchoring the principle of non-proliferation in international security policy. Over time, the Treaty had been strengthened by the implementation of nuclear safeguards to prevent the diversion of nuclear material. All States parties must use the current review cycle to further reinforce the non-proliferation regime by promoting comprehensive safeguards agreements, accompanied by additional protocols, as the gold standard in nuclear safeguards.

21. Nevertheless, the non-proliferation regime was undeniably facing many challenges. The illegal pursuit by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of nuclear weapons remained the greatest proliferation crisis to date and represented a huge threat to international peace and security. A diplomatic solution must be sought, involving a continued pressure campaign, concrete, verifiable and irreversible steps to denuclearization, and the reaccession of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

22. Germany was firmly committed to the full implementation of the joint comprehensive plan of action, which demonstrated that comprehensive diplomatic solutions to major nuclear proliferation crises were possible. The plan ensured that the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran could serve only peaceful purposes on the basis of stringent restrictions and the strictest IAEA monitoring and verification regime in the world.

23. Other weapons of mass destruction also posed a threat to the non-proliferation regime. Her country was appalled by the repeated use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, which had violated the international norm against the use of such weapons. Those responsible must be held to account.

24. The violation of existing nuclear arms control agreements was also of great concern. Such agreements between the United States and the Russian Federation had formed the backbone of efforts to reduce nuclear armaments and had yielded major security benefits, particularly for Europe. However, the Russian Federation was currently showing blatant disregard for those agreements while seeking new conventional and nuclear military capabilities. She called on the Russian Federation to allay the international community's concerns regarding its non-compliance with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and urged that country and the United States to continue their dialogue, including on strategic stability. She also called on the two countries to further reduce their nuclear arsenals and to commence negotiations on extending the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty), keeping in mind that the process required trust and full compliance with existing treaties.

25. Germany was pursuing an ambitious nuclear disarmament agenda, being convinced that not only defence and deterrence but also disarmament and arms control could contribute to global security. Positive steps that should be taken towards disarmament included a prohibition on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, the entry into force of the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and a robust and credible regime for verifying nuclear disarmament. Those steps all required cooperation and trust among stakeholders. That was also true of negative security assurances, which had played an important role in building confidence in the nuclear non-proliferation regime and in diminishing the prominence of nuclear weapons in national military doctrines.

26. Germany remained committed to promoting those and other steps to advance implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Mutual trust was of paramount importance to the Treaty's third pillar. The right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes was a precondition for global acceptance of the Treaty and offered many benefits to States. However, it had become clear that its use also involved considerable risks. States that chose not to use nuclear energy must be assured that those States that did maintained the highest standards of nuclear safety and security and complied strictly with safeguards. She commended IAEA for its invaluable work in that area. Germany was currently the fourth largest contributor to the Agency's budget and had been operating its IAEA safeguards support programme for

40 years. It was also a major voluntary contributor to the IAEA Nuclear Security Fund.

27. The deteriorating security environment, the erosion of arms control and the non-proliferation architecture, and the emergence of new technologies and threats increased the need to defend and strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Germany stood ready to work with all States parties to that end.

28. **Ms. Whyte Gómez** (Costa Rica) said that the profound changes affecting the international community necessitated a greater focus on compliance with established legal obligations as the only means of strengthening the institutional architecture for global peace and governance. In that context, the full and effective implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, as the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, was essential in promoting international peace and security. She urged all States parties to focus on achieving a successful outcome to the 2020 Review Conference that would reaffirm the Treaty's strategic role and increase its effectiveness.

29. The Treaty unequivocally underlined that the proliferation of nuclear weapons would bring humanity closer to nuclear war, with catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences. For that reason, it established the legal obligation to end the nuclear arms race and undertake steps towards nuclear disarmament without delay. Costa Rica, a peaceful country that upheld international law and respected the highest ethical and moral values, believed that continued efforts to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and bring about the total elimination of nuclear weapons were the only means of preventing the use or accidental detonation of such weapons.

30. The imbalanced implementation of the Treaty's three pillars was impeding attainment of the Treaty's objectives. At the current session, the States parties should diligently assess the progress made in implementing those pillars and, on that basis, draw up concrete recommendations for the work of the 2020 Review Conference, giving equal treatment to each pillar.

31. The Treaty's indefinite extension in no way amounted to tacit permission to maintain nuclear arsenals indefinitely. Disarmament should be neither optional nor subject to conditions unilaterally defined by a handful of States. Furthermore, no State could choose to selectively apply legally binding international instruments or justify the use or threat of use of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction. Such behaviour would undermine global peace and security.

32. Stagnated progress on disarmament issues in recent decades, the nuclear-weapon States' continued reliance on nuclear weapons in their military doctrines, the current investment of financial and human resources in programmes to produce, maintain and modernize nuclear weapons and the threat of the use of those weapons were bringing the international community dangerously close to the disastrous humanitarian consequences of such use. That risk was at its greatest since 1953. Experts warned that the fact that increased resources were being used to develop ever more sophisticated weapons of mass destruction was compounding international tensions and could trigger a new arms race.

33. Pope Francis had stated that international relations could be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms. Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, created nothing but a false sense of security, and could not constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family. The only way to ensure that nuclear weapons would never be used again was to eliminate them entirely, to which end the effective implementation of all three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including its article VI, was essential. The nuclear-weapon States, which shared responsibility for establishing renewed confidence in the non-proliferation and disarmament regime, must make concrete progress towards transparent, irreversible and verifiable disarmament. The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons bore testimony to the belief of the international community that the legally binding prohibition of nuclear weapons would make a significant contribution to achieving and maintaining a world free of such weapons, and represented a step forward in the implementation of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

34. Her country condemned the violation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of the international norm against nuclear testing and advocated the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

35. The strength of the Non-Proliferation Treaty lay in the balanced implementation of its three pillars and the obligations established in relation to each one. The third pillar, concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, provided an opportunity for increased trust and cooperation between States, and was invaluable in generating global wealth and prosperity. With regard to nuclear disarmament, efforts to reduce the risk posed by the existence of nuclear weapons and to reach an understanding on nuclear disarmament verification constituted common ground in which the international

community as a whole and non-nuclear-weapon States in particular, had a vital interest.

36. Costa Rica called on all States parties to unconditionally comply with the commitments they had made at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 review conferences, including in relation to the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference, and on all non-States parties to the Treaty to accede to it unconditionally and without delay. It also advocated the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and looked forward to constructive dialogue on that subject.

37. **Mr. Lagos Koller** (Chile) said that the current review cycle could not be allowed to end in failure in the same manner as the 2015 Review Conference. Owing to that failure, Chile regarded the Final Document and action plan of the 2010 Review Conference as continuing to be fully in force.

38. The outcomes of review conferences were directly connected to the prevailing geopolitical climate. In recent years, discouraging setbacks had overshadowed a number of positive developments, including the expression by a significant number of States of support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, an instrument designed to complement and reinforce the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Certain States took a different view, which Chile respected because the processes leading to the establishment and universal implementation of new treaties, particularly in such a politically sensitive area that was of such importance to international security, were always complex. Indeed, the Non-Proliferation Treaty had a similar history. For that reason, his country would continue to build on areas of common ground with all States that shared its goals, being convinced that all States that had not yet done so would accede to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons once they had succeeded in overcoming their dependency on nuclear deterrence. Chile was concerned by the importance that the main nuclear-weapon States continued to place on such inhumane weapons in their military doctrines. Since differences in opinion on the issue would not be overcome at the current session, it was important that the States parties should reaffirm their commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and make practical progress on steps that, while not a replacement for the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, helped to reduce the risks posed by the existence of nuclear weapons.

39. In particular, he underscored the importance of progress in de-alerting nuclear weapons, increasing transparency relating to nuclear arsenals and promoting the entry into force of the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. In that regard, he expressed support for the statement made by the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization at the Committee's previous meeting. He also supported steps towards the negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, the scope of which should include existing stocks of such material.

40. Chile welcomed the recent announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it intended to suspend nuclear testing. However, that country must also renounce all non-peaceful nuclear activities, accede once more to the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon State and accede to the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in order to enable the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which was essential for preserving regional and international peace and security.

41. As a party to the Antarctic Treaty and the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, Chile was committed to promoting the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as essential intermediate steps that had a positive impact not only on the region concerned but also on the entire international community. He therefore underscored the importance of establishing such a zone in the Middle East.

42. Chile highlighted the importance of employing gender analysis tools in discussions on nuclear weapons and, in particular, redefining certain concepts in light of an inclusive gender-based approach.

43. Emphasizing the importance of the current review cycle, he expressed the hope that the current session would continue along the same positive path as the Committee's previous session in 2017 and contribute to the success of the 2020 Review Conference.

44. **Mr. Viinanen** (Finland) said that the Non-Proliferation Treaty was a resounding success. It was the cornerstone of international peace and security and had prevented the spread of nuclear weapons, provided a basis for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and laid the foundation for nuclear disarmament.

45. The proliferation of nuclear weapons currently posed the most acute threat. The nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continued to cause grave concern. Although Finland was heartened by ongoing diplomatic efforts, it continued to urge that country to comply fully with its international obligations, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions. At the same time, in view of the important role of the joint comprehensive plan of action in furthering the goal of nuclear non-proliferation, it urged all parties to meet their

commitments under that plan. The risk of nuclear devices or material falling into the hands of non-State actors also posed a threat to non-proliferation efforts. In that respect, Finland was proud to serve as the international coordinator of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

46. Nuclear weapons must never be used again. In arms control and non-proliferation matters, trust was of the utmost importance. Every actor and action had the potential to strengthen or corrode mutual trust. Irresponsible rhetoric on the use of nuclear weapons could only harm the international community's sense of security. He encouraged the United States and the Russian Federation to continue their dialogue on strategic stability and to continue implementing the New START Treaty and Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Further reductions by those States of their nuclear arsenals were key to building confidence and advancing the ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. In that context, it was necessary to address the normative gap relating to the limitation of non-strategic nuclear weapons. Furthermore, non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty had a legitimate right to receive legally binding negative security assurances from nuclear-weapon States. Such commitments would be a positive outcome of the current review cycle.

47. The establishment of a multilateral verification mechanism and a treaty banning the production of weapons-grade fissile material was an important step towards nuclear disarmament. Finland was a long-standing supporter of the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and renewed its call on all States that had not yet done so to sign and ratify that Treaty without further delay. The recent announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its intention to cease nuclear testing, while encouraging, should logically be followed by that country's signature and ratification of the Test-Ban Treaty.

48. Finland was proud to have been the first country to sign a comprehensive safeguards agreement with IAEA, and had also signed and ratified an additional protocol. It urged all States to follow suit to demonstrate their commitment to non-proliferation with maximum transparency. Through its bilateral support programme, Finland had for many years lent its national expertise to IAEA to develop the safeguards system and train international inspectors. Peaceful applications of nuclear energy and other nuclear technologies could bring enormous benefits to the lives of millions, but required the highest standards of nuclear safety and security.

49. The Non-Proliferation Treaty was too important to be allowed to fail. It was the responsibility of State parties to make the 2020 Review Conference a success. They must seize the opportunity to reaffirm the Treaty's significance and relevance as part of the global security architecture, building mutual confidence in order to do so, and work together to make the Treaty stronger and universal.

50. **Mr. Hajnoczi** (Austria) said that his country had consistently condemned the unacceptable and irresponsible conduct by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of nuclear and ballistic missile tests in violation of several Security Council resolutions. That country must return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, resume full cooperation with IAEA and sign and ratify the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, alongside all other States that had not yet done so. The international community's shared goal of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula could be achieved only through peaceful means. He hoped that ongoing diplomatic efforts would result in compliance by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with the international system.

51. The joint comprehensive plan of action, which was the most significant achievement in the area of nuclear non-proliferation in recent years, demonstrated that a negotiation-based approach could bear fruit, and it was vital that all parties to that deal should continue to implement it. The plan could provide inspiration for a future solution to the situation on the Korean Peninsula, particularly in the light of the recent encouraging signs of real negotiations.

52. Austria had a strong record on non-proliferation, having concluded both a comprehensive safeguards agreement and an additional protocol with IAEA. Rigorous implementation and continuous improvement of the international non-proliferation framework was essential in order to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to additional States or other actors. It was regrettable that the continued reliance of certain States on nuclear weapons created an incentive for other States to pursue the nuclear option. For that reason, non-proliferation could not credibly be pursued without parallel progress on nuclear disarmament, a fact that had not been lost on the drafters of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and one that should be borne in mind by all.

53. In that light, he reminded States parties that article VI of the Treaty and the associated preambular paragraphs established nuclear disarmament as a clear obligation with the ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. The thirteen steps and the sections of the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference relating to

disarmament clearly set out the means by which that obligation, and that goal, should be fulfilled.

54. While the progress on nuclear disarmament that had been achieved to date was welcome, very few of the disarmament measures agreed within the framework of the Treaty had actually been implemented. Indeed, in many cases a reversal of attitudes towards nuclear disarmament could be observed, and there had been recent attempts to backtrack on aspects of Non-Proliferation Treaty commitments. It was therefore vital for States parties to reaffirm that all of those measures remained fully valid.

55. Since the 2015 Review Conference, the growing focus on the catastrophic and far-reaching humanitarian consequences of use of nuclear weapons had been a major development in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In that regard, he drew attention to the working paper on that topic submitted by Austria and other States and contained in document NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.9.

56. The re-emergence of the concept of "limited nuclear war" in the strategic thinking of some nuclear-weapon States was particularly concerning. If States harboured the dangerous illusion that it was possible to limit the impact of nuclear war, they would only increase the risk of a catastrophe. He reminded States parties that they had all undertaken, under the first preambular paragraph of the Treaty, to make every effort to avert such danger.

57. Humanitarian considerations had also become an important factor in the negotiation and adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was an impressive manifestation of the view held by most States that nuclear weapons, far from providing security, actually posed an existential threat to humanity. In that respect, he drew attention to working paper NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.10, submitted by his country, which provided an up-to-date assessment of the security implications of nuclear weapons. The Treaty was fully consistent with the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and was an essential legal instrument that contributed to the implementation of its article VI. Other measures to promote the implementation of article VI should include further reductions by nuclear-weapon States of their nuclear arsenals, a reduction of the role of such weapons in their military doctrines, and risk reduction efforts.

58. Austria recognized the right of States parties to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. However, that right did not entail an obligation to use nuclear energy for power generation, or to support such use by others. Rather, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development had promoted the use by States of an appropriate energy mix tailored to their individual circumstances. Accordingly, Austria had chosen not to use nuclear energy to generate power, having decided that the risks outweighed the benefits, as exemplified by the tragic incidents at the Chernobyl and Fukushima power plants. Furthermore, the question of how to safely and permanently dispose of radioactive waste had not yet been satisfactorily resolved. With regard to the current trend of introducing nuclear power to new, energy-rich regions, he reminded States parties that historically peaceful programmes had sometimes been transformed into military nuclear programmes. States that nevertheless chose to use nuclear energy for power generation must apply the highest standards of safety, security, waste management and non-proliferation.

59. **Mr. Incarnato** (Italy) said that his country attached great importance to disarmament in its broadest sense, and was fully committed to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation as essential components of its foreign policy. In that context, he reaffirmed the centrality of the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a multilateral instrument of paramount importance in maintaining and reinforcing international peace, security and stability. The Treaty remained the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and an important element in the development of nuclear applications for peaceful purposes. The action plan of the 2010 Review Conference continued to provide a good basis for pursuing the Treaty's mutually reinforcing pillars. He therefore called on States that had not yet acceded to the Treaty to do so as non-nuclear-weapon States, unconditionally and without delay, and on all States parties to implement the Treaty's provisions and commitments agreed on at previous review conferences without delay and in a balanced manner.

60. Through its article VI, the Treaty provided the only realistic legal framework for pursuing a world free of nuclear weapons in a way that promoted stability and preserved security. Moreover, nuclear disarmament could be attained only through an inclusive and progressive approach based on concrete and effective measures, including the prompt entry into force of the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Italy remained a staunch supporter of that Treaty and, as the Chair of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization for 2018, was focusing its efforts on outreach. It called on all States that had not yet signed and ratified the Treaty to do so without further delay. Meanwhile, it called on all States to respect the moratorium on nuclear test explosions and

to refrain from any actions that could undermine the Treaty.

61. The negotiation, by the Conference on Disarmament, of a fissile material cut-off treaty should be a key priority. In that regard, Italy anticipated a constructive outcome to the work of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group. Pending the entry into force of such a treaty, all States concerned should abide by a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. He also welcomed the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament.

62. Nuclear-weapon States bore fundamental responsibility for implementing article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. While he welcomed the reductions made in their nuclear arsenals to date, he encouraged further progress. He also welcomed the achievement by the Russian Federation and the United States of the central limits of the New START Treaty, and encouraged them to extend that Treaty and hold further discussions on confidence-building, transparency, verification activities and reporting. It was also important that they should preserve the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty as a landmark agreement that was key to European and international security and stability.

63. The proliferation of nuclear weapons continued to represent a major threat to international security. The IAEA safeguards system was a fundamental component of the non-proliferation regime and played an indispensable role in the implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Accordingly, Italy supported the strengthening of that system, including through universal adherence to comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols.

64. The nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remained the greatest challenge to the non-proliferation regime. Although ongoing diplomatic efforts to reach a peaceful solution were welcome, complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization must be achieved through meaningful negotiations. To that end, maximum pressure must continue to be exerted on that country, including through the strict application of sanctions. The effectiveness of those measures would depend on the unity and determination of the international community.

65. In the context of international efforts aimed at enhancing mutual confidence and strengthening the non-proliferation architecture, the joint comprehensive plan of action was a historic diplomatic success. Italy welcomed the confirmation by IAEA of the continued compliance of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the provisions of that plan. The international community must make every effort to ensure that the plan continued to provide benefits for all. The full implementation of the plan and of all provisions of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) could foster international and regional security.

66. Since nuclear-weapon-free zones were important for peace and security, Italy called on nuclear-weapon States to sign and ratify the relevant protocols of the Treaties establishing such zones, and supported the convening of a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction, to be attended by all States of the region on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at.

67. Although Italy had decided at the end of the 1980s to phase out nuclear energy for power generation, it could cite a number of successful examples of the peaceful applications of nuclear technology at the national level and had established several research centres of excellence, which had enabled it to cooperate at the international level on the further development of such applications. In recent years, it had focused on education and training in that field, and strongly supported the IAEA technical cooperation programme. Given that the peaceful uses of nuclear energy required the implementation of safeguards and appropriate and effective safety and security standards, Italy supported all initiatives aiming at enhancing the safety and security of nuclear materials and facilities.

68. **Ms. McCarney** (Canada) said that since its entry into force, the Non-Proliferation Treaty had been the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime, enabling a number of considerable achievements across its three pillars. Notably, it had limited the number of nuclear-weapon States, enshrined the right of States parties to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under robust safeguards, and provided a legal basis on which to pursue nuclear disarmament.

69. While the current session provided States parties with an opportunity to reflect on those accomplishments, they must also assess new challenges that threatened further progress, increased the risk of nuclear weapon use and limited the effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy. Despite recent encouraging developments, the determination of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to enhance its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, in violation of both the Non-Proliferation Treaty and successive Security Council resolutions, and the risk of the transfer by that country of nuclear weapon-related material and

knowledge to other States and non-State actors, remained among the foremost challenges to the non-proliferation regime. Meanwhile, confidence in nuclear diplomacy had been undermined by continued uncertainty surrounding the joint comprehensive plan of action, and the erosion of longstanding bilateral arms control and security agreements, including as a result of the violation by the Russian Federation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. More broadly, there had been a resurgence in competition between the great nuclear powers, which threatened to reignite the types of arms race and zero-sum thinking that had rightly been abandoned long ago.

70. Although Canada recognized that the international security environment was unstable, it was convinced that meaningful action to strengthen the Treaty's three pillars remained achievable. Indeed, new challenges underlined the need for urgent action. In the approach to the 2020 Review Conference, it was imperative to move forward in a spirit of constructive engagement to ensure a productive outcome.

71. Canada remained committed to the promotion of inclusive, practical initiatives aimed at halting the spread of nuclear weapons, and to efforts to achieve their eventual elimination. In particular, it was proud to lead the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group, which was making good progress in developing a full range of options for the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. In concert with its partners in the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, Canada also promoted increased transparency by all States parties with respect to their commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including reporting by nuclear-weapon States on their nuclear arsenals. Canada also continued to match its diplomatic engagement with substantial financial contributions, including through its programme to reduce the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction.

72. The principle of inclusion should guide States in all aspects of their work during the current review cycle. That required the equal representation of both women and men, not only in the composition of delegations but also in the formulation of substantive perspectives on key issues under the Treaty and on other matters of international security. Canada would strive to ensure that the values of inclusion and equal representation were promoted in all aspects of its engagement on Treaty issues, and encouraged all other States parties to do the same. In that regard, it was working to ensure the more effective incorporation of gender-based analysis in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all programming related to weapons of mass destruction.

73. The security of Canada, like that of its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, relied on nuclear deterrence. However, that should not act as a disincentive to action, as appropriate nuclear deterrence did not preclude reciprocal, step-by-step disarmament. Within the current strategic context, more could be done to limit nuclear threats and reduce arsenals.

74. While States parties remained divided on the best way to pursue their shared interests under the Treaty, they must work to build trust and confidence, and seek common ground in order to ensure consensus at the 2020 Review Conference. The current review cycle provided them with a valuable opportunity to improve the global discourse and chart a more action-oriented course at a time when such progress was imperative. She hoped that, through a spirit of genuine collaboration, States parties could strengthen prospects for a safer world, a strengthened Treaty and a more robust multilateral system.

75. **Mr. Gabriëlse** (Netherlands) said that it was States parties' collective responsibility to ensure the success of the current session. Rather than focusing on the challenges they faced, they should discuss how to move forward and ensure the success of the current review cycle. The factual summary of the Chair of the previous session of the Preparatory Committee, set out in document NPT/CONF.2020/PC.I/WP.40, could be a helpful starting point in that process. His country had also submitted a working paper (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.11) to the current session, highlighting areas in which progress might be possible. In addition, the Chair of the first session had elaborated eight guiding principles (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.I/14) that reflected the joint interests of States parties and the shared benefits of the non-proliferation regime, which could also act as a starting point in their search for common ground. He hoped those principles would receive support from States parties.

76. Although the current security environment was challenging, it could help States parties to focus their efforts. They could break challenges down and make them more manageable by asking a series of questions to guide their discussions. Those questions related to, inter alia, how States parties could prevent Treaty violations by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from eroding the authority of the Treaty, and how to prevent similar violations in the future; how to reinforce the norm against the use of nuclear weapons, for example, through risk reduction measures or the strengthening of negative security assurances; which steps towards further disarmament States parties could agree on during the current review cycle; how they could strengthen the third Treaty pillar to ensure that all

States parties benefited from nuclear technology; how to address the challenges faced by IAEA in the implementation of its safeguards mandate; how working methods could be enhanced to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of review cycles; and how the equal participation of men and women could be promoted in the context of the Treaty. The Netherlands would work hard to formulate answers to those and other questions. While that approach should not prevent States parties from engaging on more divisive issues, those issues must not dominate their discussion to the extent that they negatively affected the outcome of the current review cycle. Despite the challenging geopolitical context, it was the job of States parties to overcome challenges and move the Treaty forwards.

77. **Mr. Fu Cong** (China) said that the Non-Proliferation Treaty, as the most important multilateral treaty in the field of international nuclear arms control, had for the past half-century provided a legal basis for preventing nuclear war and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and bringing the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy to humankind.

78. The current review cycle had commenced with much uncertainty. On the one hand, calls by the international community for disarmament were growing; the joint comprehensive plan of action was being fully implemented; efforts to reach a diplomatic solution to the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula were at a turning point; and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy had entered a new phase. On the other hand, the United States, which had the largest and most advanced nuclear arsenal, was using untenable excuses to increase its nuclear capabilities, advance its nuclear deterrence policy and lower the threshold for using nuclear weapons, which increased the risk of a nuclear arms race and threatened global strategic stability.

79. Those developments raised the questions of whether to uphold or abandon the existing disarmament mechanism and whether to continue to observe the principle of consensus. There was clear disagreement with regard to the disarmament route to be followed, and double standards prevailed in relation to non-proliferation. There was also a lack of trust, and weak governance in the area of international security. The Treaty was thus facing unprecedented challenges.

80. In the context of globalization, the Cold-War mentality and zero-sum game mindset were long outdated. Pursuing absolute security would only raise tensions and the risk of war. Lasting peace could be achieved only through ensuring security for all countries. During the current review cycle, States parties should keep in mind the aspirations on which the Treaty was founded, safeguard multilateralism and insist on equal dialogue and consultation in order to maintain and promote the Treaty's authority, universality and effectiveness.

81. It was important to respect States' legitimate security concerns. A world without nuclear weapons would not be achieved overnight. In the process of addressing non-proliferation issues, regional security environments should not be ignored. Rather, States parties should promote comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in order to build an inclusive world, lasting peace and common prosperity.

82. The comprehensive prohibition and destruction of nuclear weapons went hand in hand with peace and development. Nuclear-weapon States should take more concrete actions to fulfil their obligations under article VI of the Treaty. While the State with the largest nuclear arsenal bore primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament, all nuclear-weapon States should reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines and make a legally binding commitment to the policy of "no first use" of nuclear weapons as the most practical and effective means of advancing disarmament efforts.

83. It was essential to respect the Treaty mechanism. Double standards and utilitarianism, which would severely erode the Treaty's authority and effectiveness, were the greatest enemies of the existing Treaty regime. The provisions of the Treaty must be implemented fully and consistently. It was also important to respect the outcomes of previous review conferences. States parties should constructively engage in consultations, break stalemates on difficult issues such as the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in the Middle East, and turn outcomes into tangible actions.

84. China was committed to the path of peaceful development and would never constitute a threat to any other State, nor would it pursue absolute security at the expense of others' interests. It had no intention of becoming a strategic competitor, and its strategic intentions should not be misread or distorted by other States. China had always stood for the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It adhered to a strategy of nuclear deterrence, keeping its nuclear capabilities at the minimum level required for national security. It had adopted a stable nuclear policy and had committed to the principles of no first use of nuclear weapons and refraining from the use or threat of use of such weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones.

85. China supported the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and actively promoted the certification of monitoring

stations in its territory. Four additional monitoring stations had been certified in 2017. It also supported the commencement by the Conference on Disarmament of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

86. Over the previous two years, China had been deeply engaged in the implementation of the joint comprehensive plan of action, and would continue to demonstrate objectivity and responsibility in preserving the agreement with all other parties.

87. With regard to the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, China had consistently advocated a political solution, maintained an impartial position and endeavoured to promote negotiations. All parties should seize the opportunity offered by the current easing of tensions to move forward, following the "dual-track" approach of simultaneously promoting denuclearization and establishing a peace mechanism on the Peninsula in order to forge lasting peace and stability.

88. China was engaged extensively in international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, taking the lead in building regional capacity in the area of nuclear security and promoting nuclear safety exchanges and cooperation in Asia and Europe.

89. China would continue to support the nuclear disarmament process, uphold the non-proliferation regime, develop the nuclear energy industry in a safe and efficient manner and contribute to maintaining global peace and security.

90. **Mr. Cartagena** (Spain) said that the non-proliferation regime was experiencing a phase that could be described as both the best and worst of times. On the one hand, the current year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was the cornerstone of a well-established regime and which was valuable not only in its own right but also because of the scope it offered for consensus. The Treaty had influenced the work of IAEA and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, informal export control arrangements, nuclear arms reduction treaties, the international nuclear safeguards regime, security initiatives and cooperation programmes related to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. On the other hand, the evident deterioration in geopolitical conditions, marked by tensions, uncertainty and even open challenges to international legislation, undermined the credibility of the non-proliferation regime.

91. He highlighted, in particular, the nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which to date was the only country to have conducted nuclear tests in the twenty-first century. Spain urged that country, as a member of the Conference on Disarmament, to return to the Treaty and abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes with a view to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. While he noted with cautious optimism the recent easing of tensions, it was important that tangible results should be achieved.

92. Spain was also concerned by current tensions surrounding arms reduction treaties, particularly the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, against the backdrop of the erosion of the security regime that had been in place in Europe since the end of the Cold War, and by the uncertainty surrounding the joint comprehensive plan of action. It was vital to respect the letter of that agreement and strengthen it by engaging in dialogue on related security issues without delay.

93. Furthermore, the use by certain States of the issue of weapons of mass destruction to distort information and disrupt politics was of growing concern. Such conduct amounted to a very dangerous game that ultimately hurt those who were most vulnerable in any conflict: civilians. The international community was currently witnessing such a situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

94. Against that background, Spain hoped for an open and comprehensive debate in which parties continued to make and listen to proposals. The international community must continue to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons. His country supported a gradual approach as the only feasible means of achieving that objective. Any initiative that was not based on compromise or consensus should be rejected, and divisions left behind in favour of building bridges, since all parties ultimately shared the same objective.

95. In order to strengthen the non-proliferation regime, it was necessary to create an environment that fostered disarmament, and vice-versa. The action plan of the 2010 Review Conference should remain the basis for achieving both goals. Accordingly, he underscored the need to continue promoting the universal implementation of the Treaty, to bring into force the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, to conclude a fissile material cut-off treaty and to convene a conference on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

96. With regard to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, it was important to highlight the synergy between the responsible use of nuclear energy and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Spain would continue to support IAEA in the design, funding and implementation of technical

assistance projects, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, and had also supported the Agency's Department of Safeguards through a special programme under the auspices of the European Union.

97. Spain, together with Australia and Canada, had submitted a working paper entitled "Nuclear security in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.14). The paper reflected on how technological advances, the growth in information networks, the emergence of asymmetric threats and the threat of nuclear and radiological terrorism made the topic of nuclear security increasingly complex. It also argued that the Treaty could not be excluded from discussions on such initiatives as the nuclear security summits, the Nuclear Security Contact Group or Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). The paper further noted the clear link between the protection of nuclear and radiological material and the Treaty's three pillars. Further exploration of that topic would be a worthwhile exercise that would enable reflection on what the Treaty contributed to nuclear security, and vice-versa.

98. In the current complex and uncertain climate, the usefulness and effectiveness of the Treaty must be reaffirmed by all States parties. Any failure to take a step forwards, however small, was effectively a step backwards.

99. **Mr. Sadleir** (Australia) said that in the deteriorating security environment, it was more vital than ever for States parties to reaffirm the centrality of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and strengthen the non-proliferation regime. To do so, they must focus on common ground and shared approaches.

100. Australia actively participated in two cross-regional groups of States that worked to promote and strengthen the Treaty: the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative and the Vienna Group of Ten. Those groups illustrated that diversity was an asset that need not impede progress towards shared goals; that should be borne in mind at the current session.

101. Improved transparency regarding the implementation by States parties of their commitments under the Treaty would strengthen all three pillars, especially disarmament. Another area that deserved renewed attention was the strengthening of the review process. States parties should examine how to focus their efforts in order to optimize substantive outcomes. In that respect, his country welcomed increased awareness of the need for gender perspectives and equal representation in the context of the Treaty.

102. Australia remained committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons, but was realistic about the challenges of achieving significant progress on disarmament in the prevailing climate. Nevertheless, practical steps could be taken to build trust and bring countries together to establish a stronger basis for future progress. He urged nuclear-weapon States to take the lead in producing tangible results on disarmament. A focus on strategic stability, de-escalation and risk reduction would lay the groundwork for future reductions in nuclear stockpiles. There had been useful discussions on risk reduction in the Disarmament Commission. As Chair of that Commission, Australia believed that an outcome on risk reduction would be a positive contribution to the 2020 Review Conference. One of the most effective ways to build trust was for nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States to work together. For example, work on elements of a fissile material cut-off treaty would make a substantive contribution to future negotiations. Meanwhile, serious work on disarmament verification was essential.

103. The prevention of nuclear proliferation was as important as it had been at the time of negotiation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Treaty, and the assurances it provided, must never be taken for granted. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Islamic Republic of Iran posed key proliferation challenges. The development by the former of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and its proliferation of sensitive technologies, were an unacceptable threat to the nuclear non-proliferation framework. Meanwhile, it was in the interest of the international community for all parties to the joint comprehensive plan of action to adhere to their commitments, because the plan remained the best available mechanism of ensuring that the Islamic Republic of Iran was committed to conducting an entirely peaceful nuclear programme. Safeguards regimes must remain strong, trusted and appropriately resourced. Australia continued to offer strong support to the crucial safeguards work of IAEA, and highlighted the importance of the conclusion by all States that had safeguards agreements with IAEA of additional protocols.

104. It was important to continue making substantive progress towards the entry into force of the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was a fundamental element of the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. In the meantime, Australia looked forward to the commencement of discussions regarding the provisional application of the Test-Ban Treaty's substantive provisions.

105. The recent abhorrent use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, Malaysia and the United

Kingdom underlined the need for vigilance regarding compliance with treaty obligations and accountability for the violation of international laws.

106. The benefits of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under the third pillar of the Non-Proliferation Treaty were evident from the relevance of that pillar to nine of the Sustainable Development Goals. Australia looked forward to continued collaboration within the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and in other forums to ensure that non-nuclear-weapon States continued to reap the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

107. **Mr. Yaakob** (Malaysia) said that while the world had never been more developed, globalized or dynamic, humanity remained under severe threat from the continued existence of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and the potential for their use, misuse and proliferation. Accordingly, effective measures on disarmament and non-proliferation should be the international community's highest priority. The Non-Proliferation Treaty remained the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and all States parties were required to implement the Treaty in a full, objective and balanced manner.

108. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation were mutually reinforcing, and were essential for strengthening international peace and security. All States parties were obliged to negotiate in good faith on effective measures to achieve verifiable, irreversible and transparent disarmament, and non-proliferation was one of the means of achieving that goal. Therefore, pursuing non-proliferation alone while ignoring disarmament obligations was both counterproductive and unsustainable.

109. He emphasized that the purpose of the Treaty was not only to prevent non-nuclear-weapon States from acquiring nuclear weapons, but also to disarm nuclear-weapon States. The Treaty's extension in 1995 did not entail the indefinite possession by those States of nuclear arsenals. States parties should remain cognizant of the humanitarian dimension of disarmament and give due consideration to the humanitarian consequences of any nuclear explosion. All States in possession of nuclear weapons should therefore never use or threaten to use those weapons.

110. Malaysia had joined 58 other States in signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and was convinced that the political and legal impact of that Treaty would steer the international community towards a world without nuclear weapons. The instrument was legally sound and feasible to implement, and sent a powerful message that nuclear weapons were categorically unacceptable. He therefore called on all States that that had not yet signed the Treaty to do so, and to work together towards its entry into force. Malaysia also called on all States that had not yet done so to sign and ratify the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Pending that Treaty's entry into force, all nuclear weapon tests and related research and development activities must cease.

111. His country recognized the importance of IAEA as the sole authority competent to verify the fulfilment of the safeguards obligations assumed by States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty with a view to preventing the diversion of nuclear technology from peaceful uses. The Agency was also the global focal point for technical cooperation in the area of nuclear applications.

112. Nuclear-weapon-free zones strengthened peace and security by promoting greater transparency and dialogue among States at the regional level, thereby reducing the risk of regional tensions and conflicts. Malaysia was committed to the full and effective implementation of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and valued engagement as a means of resolving all outstanding issues. Nuclear-weapon States must provide unconditional assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to all States within such zones. Nuclear-weapon States must also ratify the protocols to all treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, withdraw any reservations or interpretative declarations incompatible with the object and purpose of those treaties, and respect the denuclearization status of those zones.

113. In that context, Malaysia supported the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and called for full implementation of the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, which was an integral component of the package of decisions that had enabled the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The resolution would remain valid until its objectives had been achieved.

114. States parties must be resolute in fulfilling their obligations, honouring their commitments and striving for progress at the current session. Malaysia stood ready to work closely with all other States Parties in that endeavour, towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

115. **Mr. Koru** (Turkey) reaffirmed the importance of the Non-Proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for pursuing nuclear disarmament. At the mid-point of the current review cycle, the priority was to maintain the Treaty as a major instrument for reinforcing international peace, security and stability,

and to promote its universal implementation. Turkey, alongside its partners in the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, would continue to play a constructive role in bridging differences during the current review cycle.

116. Turkey supported systematic, progressive, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament and encouraged all nuclear-weapon States to take further steps towards that goal, as it was those States that bore primary responsibility for such disarmament. It was essential to preserve and build on the progress made over the past 30 years. The prevailing complex and volatile security environment required States parties to show restraint and reach diplomatic solutions. Turkey renewed its call for all non-States parties to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States. A world without nuclear weapons could be achieved only by taking into account the international security environment and focusing on incremental steps that delivered concrete results.

117. Turkey also called on all States to uphold moratoriums on nuclear weapon test explosions and any other nuclear explosions. It was regrettable that the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty had yet to enter into force. All States that had not yet signed and ratified that Treaty must do so without delay. Another essential step was the commencement by the Conference on Disarmament of negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty. Turkey reaffirmed its strong commitment to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, as called for in the 1995 resolution.

118. IAEA safeguards were a vital component of the non-proliferation regime. Comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols were essential tools in establishing a solid verification standard. Accordingly, Turkey called on States that had not yet implemented those agreements and protocols to do so without further delay. It also underscored the crucial role of export controls in supporting the fulfilment of non-proliferation obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

119. It was regrettable that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continued to conduct nuclear and ballistic missile tests in violation of Security Council resolutions. While Turkey noted the recent period of restraint and the suspension of those tests, it urged that country to comply with its international obligations, return to the Treaty, implement IAEA safeguards and ratify the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

120. The joint comprehensive plan of action was a significant diplomatic achievement, ensuring both regional and international peace and stability, and should therefore be preserved. The plan testified to the continued relevance of not only the Non-Proliferation Treaty but also the use of diplomacy to solve disagreements. It was noteworthy that all IAEA reports confirmed the compliance of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the agreement.

121. Turkey supported the inalienable right of States to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. IAEA, by administering nuclear safeguards in accordance with the Treaty, played a pivotal role in the non-proliferation regime and in strengthening the international nuclear security framework. Turkey had concluded both a comprehensive safeguards agreement and additional protocol with IAEA, and in 2012, the Agency had confirmed that all nuclear material in the country had continued to be used only in peaceful activities, which proved the high standard of the country's system for the control of nuclear material.

122. Despite the many challenges that had faced the Non-Proliferation Treaty in the 50 years since its opening for signature, progress had been made and the Treaty had facilitated the identification of areas of agreement, thus advancing the shared goal of a more secure world. That should be the basis for continued efforts.

123. **Mr. Al Kaabi** (United Arab Emirates) said that his country remained committed to efforts to achieve and maintain a world free of the threat posed by nuclear weapons, and encouraged all steps that strengthened global peace and security. The Non-Proliferation Treaty provided an effective framework for the international non-proliferation regime, and was a key platform for the responsible development of nuclear energy. The United Arab Emirates had made good progress in developing its nuclear power programme in full compliance with its international obligations and in line with the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation, its four nuclear reactors being in the advanced stages of construction. Thanks to its close collaboration with IAEA, the country's nuclear energy programme was considered a model for countries wishing to embark on their own peaceful and responsible nuclear power programmes. Moreover, through IAEA, his country shared its experience and best practices with the Agency's other member States. The role of the Agency should continue to be strengthened so that adequate support could be provided to its member States. While all States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty were entitled to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, nuclear programmes must remain transparent, peaceful and compliant with IAEA standards, and must therefore be subject to IAEA safeguards. The United

Arab Emirates expected all nuclear programmes to comply with the verification requirements of the safeguards system and thus to build the confidence of the international community and allay its concerns. Additional protocols to comprehensive safeguards agreements complemented that system, and he encouraged States parties to conclude additional protocols as a means of fortifying the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

124. In that respect, the United Arab Emirates continued to regard the cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran with IAEA as essential, and hoped that that country would continue to comply fully with its obligations under the joint comprehensive plan of action, Agency safeguards and the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In addition, the Islamic Republic of Iran should work with IAEA to facilitate the verification and monitoring of its nuclear activities, and address all regional and international concerns to provide sufficient assurances of the exclusively peaceful nature of its programme.

125. The United Arab Emirates was firmly committed to pursuing the entry into force, without delay, of the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as an important element of the global disarmament regime. It condemned the continued development and testing of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which undermined the non-proliferation regime and threated regional stability and international security.

126. The United Arab Emirates recognized the challenges faced by the non-proliferation regime, and noted the urgent need to implement measures to strengthen it. Progress must be made across all three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Furthermore, robust efforts must be taken by the international community to achieve the Treaty's universal implementation. He therefore called on all non-States parties to accede to the Treaty without delay.

127. The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East was a priority, as it would support the Treaty's objectives and enhance regional and international security. He hoped that significant progress could be made during the current review cycle towards the realization of the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference and the convening of a conference on such a zone. With the aim of advancing the objectives outlined in the Treaty, the United Arab Emirates reaffirmed its commitment to engaging constructively with States parties to accomplish significant and fruitful progress.

128. **Ms. Travnik** (Slovenia) said that her country strongly supported nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, and that the common goal of a world without nuclear weapons must be achieved progressively, through full implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

129. Recalling that in the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference, States parties had undertaken to make every effort to bring the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force, she said that that topic had been discussed at the Bled Strategic Forum in Slovenia, a high-level platform for addressing pressing regional and global issues, in 2016 and 2017. In view of the importance of that Treaty's entry into force for global security, Slovenia called on all non-States parties to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay or preconditions.

130. Negotiations by the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material cut-off treaty must begin. Slovenia supported all relevant General Assembly resolutions and the convening of open-ended consultative meetings of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group. Those meetings, and the recently established subsidiary body to the Conference, would help bridge differences of opinion regarding the treaty. Significant progress had been made both in that area and in relation to disarmament verification.

131. She encouraged all nuclear-weapon States to participate in initiatives to promote transparency in the area of ballistic missiles, a reduction in the operational readiness of nuclear weapons, negative security assurances and the establishment and maintenance of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which were also important steps. Effective, verifiable and irreversible disarmament required not only active engagement on the part of those States but also appropriate technical and security conditions. She also encouraged the United States and the Russian Federation to extend the New START Treaty and preserve the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

132. As a country with an operating nuclear power reactor, Slovenia attached great importance to the work of IAEA, as demonstrated by its current membership of the Agency's Board of Governors. She commended the significant contribution of IAEA to the implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and its work to ensure the ongoing compliance by the Islamic Republic of Iran with its commitments under the joint comprehensive plan of action. That plan showed that even the most difficult issues could be resolved through diplomatic means. Slovenia therefore expected continued compliance with the deal by all relevant parties, which was essential to ensure international confidence in the

exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme.

133. She welcomed the upcoming high-level talks between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and between the latter country and the Republic of Korea, and supported diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalating the situation and achieving the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through peaceful means. However, she condemned the violation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of numerous Security Council resolutions, and called on all States to fully and effectively implement the relevant restrictive measures. Meanwhile, the Syrian Arab Republic must resolve all outstanding issues and adhere to its additional protocol, which, together with its comprehensive safeguards agreement, constituted an effective verification standard.

134. Slovenia was concerned by the risk of non-State actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Accordingly, it supported Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the work of the Committee established pursuant to that resolution. International cooperation in the area of nuclear security was a means of effectively addressing both national and international challenges. As a member of the Nuclear Security Contact Group, Slovenia aimed to facilitate cooperation and strengthen activities in that area. Furthermore, as a country whose experts had been heavily involved in the process of preparing the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, Slovenia underlined the importance of the universalization and full implementation of that instrument.

135. Nuclear security and safety enabled nuclear technology to be used for peaceful purposes. In that regard, Slovenia welcomed the contribution of IAEA to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It supported the Agency by offering technical assistance, and was always willing to share its experience with others and wished to improve its own capabilities. Such capacity-building was vital for any country that used nuclear technology.

136. **Ms. Guitton** (France) said that in the deteriorating international security environment, it was crucial to preserve the integrity of non-proliferation standards, consolidate a law-based international order and unambiguously reaffirm the authority of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which remained the cornerstone of the collective security architecture and represented an irreplaceable bulwark against proliferation crises. The Treaty could be strengthened only through concrete and realistic measures, as part of a balanced and integrated approach to its three pillars. Cooperation and consensus were required to enable States parties to fulfil their collective responsibilities and contribute to international peace and security.

137. Unfortunately, the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems had grown. The previous year, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had conducted an increasing number of destabilizing activities and continued its illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, in violation of numerous Security Council resolutions. The international community must remain united and determined in order to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of those programmes. In that respect, she welcomed the recent statements by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea regarding the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Those statements must be followed by concrete efforts to engage in sincere negotiations. During the current review cycle, the resolution of that crisis must be given the highest priority. Accordingly, France and a number of other States parties had produced a joint statement, set out in document NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/9 and open to sponsorship by all States, reaffirming their commitment to the integrity of the Treaty.

138. The joint comprehensive plan of action was a robust non-proliferation agreement and an asset to international peace and security. It must be preserved and fully implemented by all parties as transparently as possible, under strict IAEA supervision. However, France was seriously concerned by the rapid development of the Iranian ballistic missile programme and by the transfer of missiles to other countries and non-State actors in the region. Iran must cease such activities and comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions. France attached great importance to efforts to continuously strengthen the IAEA safeguards system, and called on all States that had not yet concluded additional protocols to do so.

139. The unacceptable violations of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (Chemical Weapons Convention) in the Syrian Arab Republic significantly undermined the international non-proliferation regime, and increased the need to investigate that country's past and present nuclear activities and its possible ties with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In the face of those challenges, the international community must do its utmost to reaffirm the inviolability of the principle of non-proliferation and hold the perpetrators of any violations to account. There could be no impunity.

140. France continued to comply with its Treaty obligations, including those specifically linked to its status as a nuclear-weapon State. In the area of non-proliferation, it had pursued a policy of responding robustly to threats and to fulfil its responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council. In accordance with a progressive approach to nuclear disarmament, France continued to implement its commitments under article VI of the Treaty. It remained committed to pursuing the objective of a world without nuclear weapons whenever conditions allowed, and had actively supported initiatives aimed at promoting gradual, realistic progress. In particular, it had participated in the work of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group and contributed to various disarmament verification activities, which built confidence and ensured the credibility of future commitments. Moreover, France had maintained dialogue with other nuclear-weapon States, particularly concerning doctrines and strategic stability. Those efforts were essential for strengthening mutual understanding. Drawing on its mastery of nuclear technologies, it had continued to support the responsible development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in accordance with the highest safety, security and non-proliferation standards. France also supported the important work of IAEA in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and had increased its efforts in relation to international cooperation and the transfer of knowledge.

141. With regard to nuclear disarmament, France had identified a number of priorities for action in preparation for the 2020 Review Conference. One was the resumption of constructive and inclusive multilateral dialogue, which, unlike recent stigmatizing initiatives, required agreement on the objective of a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all, and on the conditions necessary to achieve that goal. Such dialogue must be based on respect for national and regional security interests, and for the fact that nuclear deterrence remained an essential component of stability and international security. The negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty was also essential, particularly in the face of a looming arms race. The entry into force of the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was another key priority; accordingly, France called on all States that were not yet parties to sign and ratify that instrument and to cooperate fully with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. In addition, the United States and the Russian Federation, which together possessed almost 90 per cent of the world's nuclear weapons, must continue to reduce their nuclear arsenals, even after the New START Treaty expired in 2021. Further, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which made a crucial contribution to Euro-Atlantic stability, should be preserved.

142. States parties must continue to promote the safe, responsible and sustainable development of civil nuclear energy. It was with that objective in mind that France had submitted to the Committee a working paper, contained in document NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.8, on the establishment of a framework for civil nuclear cooperation in order to share best practices.

143. **Mr. Kim In-chul** (Republic of Korea) reaffirmed his country's commitment to the Treaty and to maintaining and strengthening the non-proliferation regime at the current critical juncture. The Treaty remained the cornerstone of that regime, and since the three Treaty pillars were mutually reinforcing, they should be pursued in a balanced manner. The current review cycle was particularly important given that it coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty. It was essential to prove that the Treaty remained relevant and was contributing to a better and safer world for future generations.

144. Despite a number of remarkable achievements, serious challenges remained. His country was particularly concerned by the threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Since the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference, that country had conducted its sixth nuclear test and launched multiple ballistic missiles. Those activities, which had been met only with stronger sanctions, seriously undermined the non-proliferation regime, the de-facto moratorium on nuclear testing and the Charter of the United Nations. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea could not have the status of a nuclear-weapon State. Its only option was to abandon its nuclear weapon programme in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, and return to compliance with Treaty obligations and IAEA safeguards. He therefore welcomed the country's recent announcement that it would discontinue nuclear and ballistic missile tests and dismantle its nuclear test site. As the core stakeholder, the Republic of Korea had worked closely with the international community to strengthen the implementation of Security Council sanctions while pursuing efforts to resume dialogue in pursuit of a peaceful solution. Those efforts had resulted in the agreement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to hold summit meetings with his country and, prospectively, the United States. Those meetings were an opportunity to lay the foundations for achieving the denuclearization of and permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. His Government would continue to uphold the unwavering principle of denuclearization and to apply sanctions until the Democratic People's Republic

of Korea had taken substantial action. He requested States parties' support in that respect.

145. Growing tensions and disagreements among nuclear-weapon States weakened prospects for nuclear disarmament, which was intrinsically linked to the current security situation. In order to achieve genuine progress, efforts must be made to create an environment conducive to such disarmament. Those efforts might include eased tensions, crisis management, risk reduction and increased communication. An atmosphere of frank dialogue and cooperation was also essential. Hasty attempts to enforce disarmament would neither achieve real progress nor contribute to the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons. States should work together to improve the security environment in general, while taking practical and effective steps to facilitate disarmament efforts. In that regard, the Republic of Korea supported the work of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group and looked forward to its final report. It was also committed to the entry into force of the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and commended the work of the signatories to that Treaty to build and strengthen the International Monitoring System.

146. Most States parties believed that the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes was an area where wider consensus could be reached. The Republic of Korea attached great importance to strengthening the IAEA safeguards system, including through the universal application of additional protocols. IAEA should be provided with the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate. His country also endorsed and supported the Agency's technical cooperation programme as the core mechanism for providing developing countries with greater access to the peaceful applications of nuclear energy. As an early contributor to the nuclear security architecture, the Republic of Korea had participated in the preparatory processes for the 2019 IAEA Ministerial Conference and the 2021 review conference on the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

147. In spite of diverging views and priorities, all States parties shared responsibility for maintaining and strengthening the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime. They could not afford to fail during the current review cycle.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

148. **Mr. Yermakov** (Russian Federation) said that he felt compelled to respond to several inappropriate statements made by other representatives in relation to two topics unrelated to the current proceedings, namely chemical disarmament in the Syrian Arab Republic and the incident in Salisbury, United Kingdom. Surely delegations had enough difficult matters to address in relation to the Non-Proliferation Treaty without raising such unrelated issues. It seemed that certain representatives had simply lost their way. The current session was not a Security Council or General Assembly meeting with an open agenda; rather, the shared goal of those present was to strengthen the Treaty. He therefore wondered why the representative of the European Union had suddenly raised the issue of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and accused the Syrian Government of having perpetrated such attacks. Important as that issue might be, the European Union no doubt faced many other important problems for the discussion of which the Preparatory Committee was an altogether inappropriate forum. The claims made by that representative were an unjustified distraction for the representatives of the 190 States who had come to discuss the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

149. Moreover, there was not a single piece of evidence, nor would there be, of chemical weapons use by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, for one very simple reason: that Government had absolutely no reason to use such weapons. The Syrian Arab Republic, which found itself in the difficult position of combating international terrorism on its own territory, had voluntarily surrendered its chemical weapons arsenal in 2013. Furthermore, in 2015, under the strictest possible control of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and with the assistance of many countries, including the Russian Federation, the United States and countries of the European Union, chemical weapons had been removed from Syrian territory and destroyed. It was a different story when it came to terrorist groups. The hard-line opposition remained active, and was supported by the United States and certain countries of the European Union, which did possess arsenals of chemical weapons. Syrian troops and members of Russian police forces were constantly finding such arsenals in liberated territories, and reported those discoveries to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. However, a blind eye had been turned to those reports. The websites of the Russian Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs contained irrefutable evidence in that regard. On Syrian territory, chemical weapons were being used by terrorist groups, not the Government.

150. One year earlier, there had allegedly been a chemical weapons incident in Khan Shaykhun. The Russian Federation had demanded an investigation. The United States Secretary of State had asked the Russian Federation to provide expert assistance, which it had

duly prepared to do. His country had then been informed that its assistance was no longer required. It appeared that, as soon as the United States had realized that its version of events was collapsing, it had abandoned its call to send experts and immediately launched missile strikes on Shayrat Airbase, for which there could be only one possible reason: to prevent the truth from being revealed. Tragically, the same methods had been used in 2018: for two months, February and March, the Russian Federation had not only warned that the "White Helmets" were preparing a provocation by fabricating a claim that chemical attacks had been carried out in a populated area in the Syrian Arab Republic, but had even identified Douma as a possible target. As usual, its warnings had not been heeded. On 7 April 2018, the White Helmets, who were financially backed by the United States and the United Kingdom, had carried out yet another heinous fabrication. The Russian Federation had done its utmost to allow inspectors, who had been in Damascus, ready to travel to visit the site. However, the United States had instead decided to launch the biggest airstrikes against a sovereign State in history, without Security Council approval and in gross violation of the Charter of the United Nations. The question was whether it was necessary to discuss those issues at the current session, or whether they should be avoided in order to avoid undermining various discussions on the session agenda. The Russian Federation naturally had plenty to say concerning the events in the Syrian Arab Republic and Salisbury, but there was no reason why it should do so within the Preparatory Committee.

151. **Mr. Wood** (United States of America) said it might well be on account of the behaviour of the Russian Federation that so many sensitive issues had been raised at the current session. It was the Russian Federation that had lost its way, through its backing of the regime in Damascus and that regime's use of chemical weapons. The United States had raised the issue because a fundamental non-proliferation norm had been undermined numerous times. While the representative of the Russian Federation alleged that chemical weapons had been removed from the Syrian Arab Republic, it was clear that not all of those weapons had been accounted for.

152. One of the fundamental problems was that the Russian Federation was not interested in an independent investigation into the chemical weapons attacks that had taken place in the Syrian Arab Republic. It had vetoed several Security Council resolutions aimed at re-establishing the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. The Russian Federation always found a way to blame others for things it knew they had not done. In Douma, for example, access had been granted to inspectors only after quite some time. Multiple international reports had suggested that the reason for that delay might have been to allow the Syrian Arab Republic and the Russian Federation to clean up the site. Many questions had been raised, and although no did not have the answers, the United States was entitled to speak out on that violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which was a critical international norm, and encouraged others to do the same.

153. **Mr. Al Ashkar** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed agreement with the representative of the Russian Federation that raising such an issue at the current session was inappropriate and proved that those who had done so had lost their way and were purposely wasting the valuable time of all delegations. The accusations were a smear campaign aimed at exerting pressure on his country and demonizing his Government. They were also designed to conceal the aggressive policy of the United States and its flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations through the illegal presence of its forces in one third of Syrian territory.

154. Moreover, the accusations had come at a time when the Syrian Arab Army had claimed victory over many terrorist groups, including through the liberation of Eastern Ghouta from four years of occupation by terrorists who had been launching missiles at Damascus, killing innocent civilians. In any such case, there was no reason why an army should need to use chemical weapons, which would not result in any military victory or gains. The positive talks taking place in Sochi, Russian Federation, were being obstructed by certain countries in order to serve their own interests at the expense of innocent Syrian civilians, and to protect terrorist groups. The dishonourable accusations had also come at a time when the United States had failed to secure the adoption of Security Council resolutions aimed at fabricating evidence that the Syrian Government was using chemical weapons, in a bid to blackmail that Government, which would never use such weapons. Such accusations brought to mind the false claims made in 2003 of evidence and information regarding the possession by Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. United Nations bodies must no longer be exploited to sabotage countries.

155. The Syrian Arab Republic condemned the use of chemical weapons, which was immoral regardless of when they were used and by whom. His country had fulfilled its obligations in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, and had respected the letter and spirit of that Convention. The Syrian Arab Republic no longer had any chemical weapons, as confirmed by the

head of the joint inspection unit of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. His country cooperated transparently with that Organisation and had even invited an inspection team to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma. It was cooperating with that team at present.

156. He underlined the importance of the use by representatives of appropriate diplomatic language in all international forums.

157. **Mr. Wood** (United States of America) said that the Syrian Arab Republic had no moral authority or credibility to address the issue, which undermined the international security environment. As his Government had repeated on many occasions, the regime and its enablers would be held accountable for chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic.

158. **Mr. Yermakov** (Russian Federation) reiterated his call for all delegations to refrain now and in future from raising the issue, on any pretext, of chemical disarmament in the Syrian Arab Republic, which could disrupt the work of the current session. In particular, he urged the representatives of the United States and the European Union not to seek to raise the issue, since the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic had every moral, political and military right to protect its own country. The United States had intervened in the conflict in violation of the Charter of the United Nations. As early as 2011, the United States had claimed that chemical weapons would be used by the Syrian Government and that it would attack that country in response. The United States had then done its utmost to stage such events. Although it had failed, it had twice launched missile strikes against the sovereign State of the Syrian Arab Republic. There was a specialized forum where the issue could be addressed, namely, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.